Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

weeping," and as being cognate with the Phenician or Hebrew word above mentioned. In corroboration of this etymology, it will be remembered that the pre-eminent qualification of an Irish *Bacach* consisted in a lamenting musical appeal already so frequently alluded to under the name of *crónawn.* To those, however, who may not be disposed to seek so far for an etymon, we may propose the modern Irish word *bacach,* denoting "a lame person"; many of the fraternity in question having no doubt assumed lameness for the purpose of exiting pity.

William Hackett. Cork.

ON THE USE OF CERTAIN ANTIQUE BRONZE ARTICLES, SUPPOSED BY SOME TO BE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

There is a class of antiquities found occasionally in Ireland which are deserving of some notice for various reasons, and particularly as their nature has been altogether misunderstood until lately, and as considerable doubt still exists as to the manner in which they were used. I allude to certain bronze articles, whose form may be described in general terms as that of a long, slender bar, bent into several abrupt curves, and terminated by a large, flat disk: on some specimens a helix or spiral of bronze wire is found in one of the curves.

We find a notice of several of these curious objects published in 1845, in the *Proceedings* of the Royal Irish Academy, (vol. iii, pp. 135—6,) by the late Dr. Robert Ball, illustrated by engravings. He assumes that they were what are called "crotals," or at least a sort of semi-musical instrument of the same nature as the castanet, and used very much after the fashion of the "bones," now employed as an accompaniment to the so-called "nigger melodies." The notion that these instruments were intended for producing a noise of some sort, may be traced to that source of so many antiquarian errors, General Vallancey. In the published *Catalogue of Relics of Ancient Art shown at the Dublin Exhibition in* 1853, (p. 149,) we find the following description applied to the object represented in the annexed Plate I. fig. 1:—"A bronze instrument, called by Vallancey a 'crepitaculum.' This was found during the improvements of the River Shannon, at Athlone, in the summer of 1849:"—a locality, by the way, very unlikely to have furnished a musical instrument. Dr. Ball, however, in the article above referred, to adhered to this notion, and in confirmation of it adduced the testimony of a gentleman recently returned from Persia, that instruments closely resembling this were used in that country, like castanets, for marking the time in music. It is now nearly twenty years since this statement was published, and although I have had opportunities of making inquiry from many Eastern travellers, I have never found one who had seen anything of the kind.

I am not disposed to deny that, in the East, dancing-girls, conjurors, and serpent-charmers may employ tinkling disks of bell-metal or silver for accompanying their movements; but after rather extensive inquiry, and the examination of numerous books of travels, I have never hitherto been able to obtain a confirmation of the statement in question. On this account, and likewise for some reasons to be given hereafter, I am inclined to believe that it was altogether erroneous.

Dr Ball maintained that these bronze articles, (of which there are three specimens in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy,) had properly but one disk, and not two as represented in engravings published both by Ledwich, in his *Antiquities of Ireland* and by Camden, in his *Britannia*. He founded his arguments on the fact that the three specimens in that Museum with single disks were each evidently complete, "while the one figured by Ledwich and Camden" (and which lately existed in the Museum of Dublin College) "is a compound of two specimens most rudely and *recently* rivetted together with a common copper rivet." Mr. Petrie, who had every opportunity of examining the double specimen in the College Museum, and several others found with it, which were in the collection of the late Austin Cooper, Esq., informs me that he altogether differed in opinion with Dr. Ball as to the modernness of the rivetting, considering that the twelve articles when found were all of them yoked or linked together in couples, though the rivetted work was very inferior to that of the disks themselves. It was a secondary thought, leading to an application of these things to a use for which they were not originally designed.

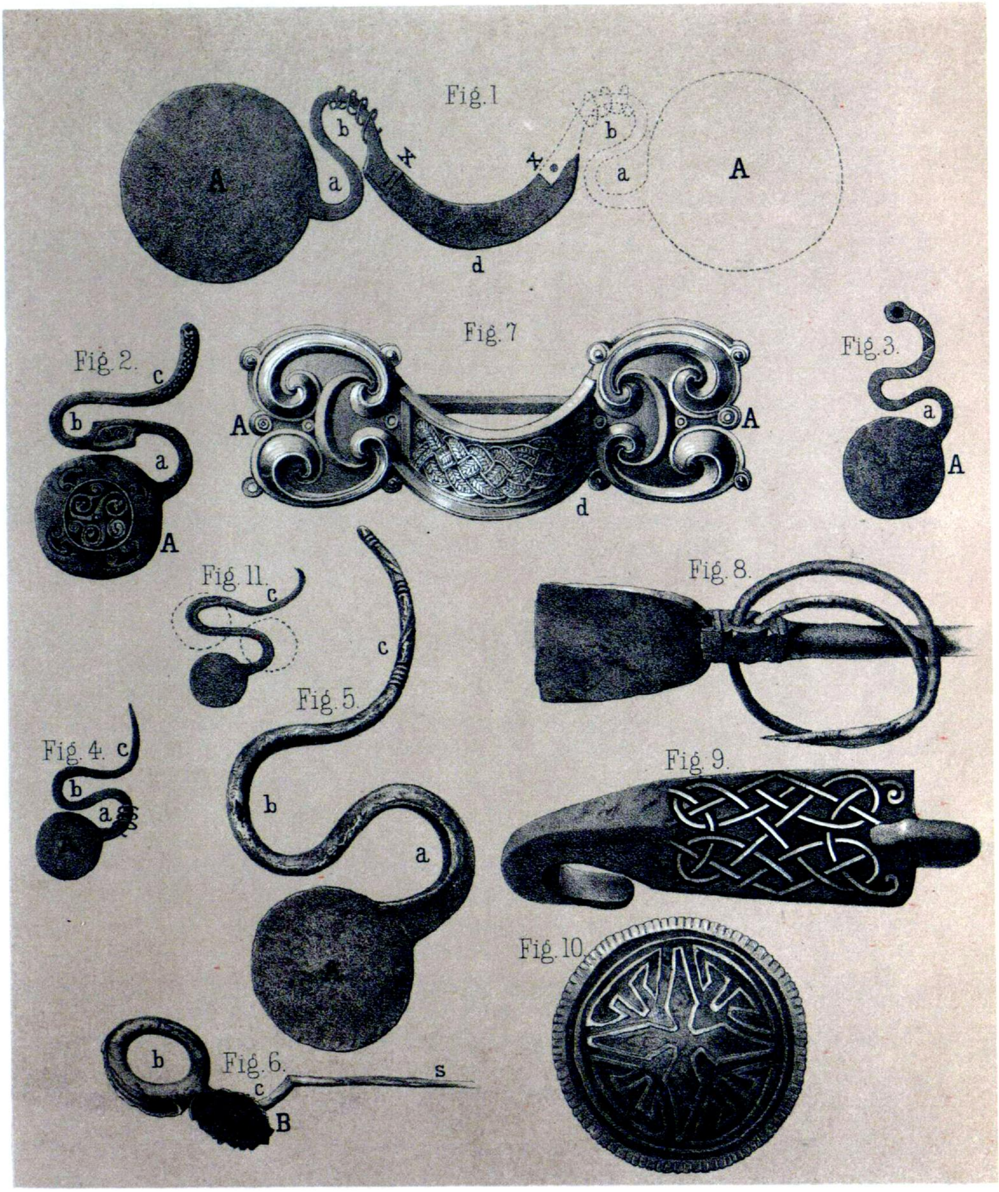
Any one who will look at the engraving of one of the articles above referred to, here copied in our Plate I. fig. 1, and compare it with the specimens now preserved in the Academy's Museum, will at once see that they are complete with a single disk. To this disk (see plate I. fig. 5, from a specimen in the Editor's collection), is attached a tail bent into three curves, forming a double hook very much of the same kind as we see used in the belt of a military officer of the present day. One of these modern belt-hooks is represented in plate I. (fig. 9), adding an imaginary disk at one end (in dotted lines), which may be conceived to act as a counterbalance weight, while the other end is prolonged (also in dotted lines) to correspond with our ancient type. If such a fastener were substituted in an officer's belt for the present plain double hook, the metallic disk would hang downwards by its own weight, and the extended pin would point upwards. Now suppose the large specimen shown in Plate I. fig. 1, to be secured by its spiral wires to the two ends of a sword-belt in the position of the ordinary double hook (fig. 9); if we press it downwards by the outer hook *c*, in the direction *h*, we find that both the spirals will slide along the tail as the disk rises. The spiral on the bend *a* is stopped by the disk, and rests at the point of junction between the disk and the tail; but the second spiral is free to traverse beyond the bend *b* as far as a certain point, when the rest of the tail *c* will fly through it with a sudden spring if there be sufficient strain on the loops *a* and *b* in the direction shown by the arrows *d* and *f*. The instrument will thus act as a lever-spring-latch, which could readily be employed for securing a belt or a cloak instead of a hook or fibula. That it is not a fibula or buckle is evident from the absence of a tongue in every specimen known. If used for fastening a mantle, it would enable the wearer to detach himself from it in an instant, and escape from an enemy attempting to detain him; and if a sufficient strain were used on the hooks *a* and *b*, it would bend or give way, and so detach itself—in this respect being a sort of safety-latch—giving way and so saving the article fastened from being torn.—The fact of the discovery of one of these articles among a quantity of swords and weapons of all ages in the river Shannon, at Athlone, likewise goes to corroborate the idea that it was a portion of military apparel, and not, as supposed by Vallancey, Dr. Ball, and others, a musical instrument.

Dr. Ball was under the impression that the specimen with two disks, lately in Trinity College Museum, had been made out of two single ones rudely rivetted together after their discovery, as indicated by his statement that they were so connected *recently*; but my examination of the instrument itself did no more than show that the workmanship of the joining was bad; and this defect might readily have been concealed, when the article was in use, by covering the part with thin strips of leather, &c. The fact is, that six such specimens were found at the same place, all with a second disk connected in a similar manner by supplemental pieces joined by one or more rivets: and my impression is that, in making this junction, the prolonged portions of the tails of two single ones had been cut off previously in order to form an instrument applicable to a different purpose. This seems evident from the circumstance that the double-pointed spirals, (represented in plate II. fig. 1) still remain on the bends *b*, *b*, of the Trinity College specimen, from which they cannot escape. These spirals made of fine wire, were quite suitable for forming a secure attachment to a dress by turning them round so as to grasp the leather or cloth by penetrating it. By reversing the motion, and turning the spiral backwards, the dress would be released. In the case of the fastener with two disks, each spiral would secure one side of the dress; and when both were freed from it, the fastener would separate itself entirely from the garment. This process would not, however, be so rapid or immediate in its action as in the case of the single disk with curved tail, where the pressure alone on the tail *c* would at once relieve the fastener, by allowing the tail *c* to escape through the helix *b*.

The existence of these spiral wires on the instruments now described (both double and single) is fatal to the theory that they were used as castanets, or "crepitacula," as the wire spirals would tend to damp and destroy any vibratory sounds produced by striking the metallic disks together. But besides this, we have evidence of another kind, in the fact that the part which appears worn by use in several specimens with the single disk, is not the disk itself, but the bends *a* and *b* in the single specimens,—the very places where the rubbing of the helix or of some connecting link would naturally chafe the metallic bar. Also the back of the instrument would have a tendency, from rubbing constantly against the dress, to become polished; and such I find to be the case in several of those with the single disks.

But another and a more cogent reason, which led me to believe that these articles were intended for personal use, was that I had discovered on the disk of one of them (plate II. fig. 2,) evident traces of *enamelling*; and the condition of the surface of several other specimens indicated that they had originally been covered with some ornamental work of that kind. The complete proof of this, however, did not present itself until I had examined the antiquities at the Dublin Exhibition of 1853, when a specimen of the object in question was exhibited by Mr. Cooke of Parsonstown. The description of it given in the Official Catalogue, (p. 150) is as follows:—" One side is rough and unfinished, but the other is highly ornamented with chevrons and lozenges in enamel. It was found in the island at Dowris, King's County." This specimen is the one represented in our plate I. fig. 2. The back or side of the disk, here described as "rough and unfinished," was found on a closer examination to be covered with an *enamel* of one uniform colour, but which had become corroded and rough by long exposure to moisture in the earth. Enough of it remained, however, to protect the bronze from oxidation; for, had this taken place, it is likely that large portions of the enamel would have scaled off and exposed the metal. The entire surface on both sides of the disk appears to have been completely coated with enamel,—a very unsuitable preparation for an article intended to be struck against another, as in a short time it would be defaced. I have satisfied myself that the coating is not a *patina* or oxidation of the metal, but a real vitreous enamel. Indeed, so many articles of copper occur in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy which are actually coated, or which bear evident traces of coating and inlaying with coloured enamels, that we are forcibly led to the conclusion that this process, now lost, was formerly perfectly well understood in Ireland. The hollow patterns on the front and back of the Cross of Cong, in the same Museum, appear to have been intended for the reception of an ornamental material of this kind, though the process of filling them may not have been completed.

Modern Irish antiquarians seem to have adopted without question the opinion that brooches or fibulæ were always used *singly* as cloak-fasteners; but certain fashions in Northern Africa &c. where such contrivances are still retained in use, favor the opinion that they were used in couples. This is the custom at present among the Moors of Barbary. In the case of the disinterments of several skeletons (in the Phœnix Park, Dublin), supposed to be Danish, *two* brooches have been found on each, one on the right and one on the left breast; leading to the inference that in ancient times, a separate front-piece (probably ornamented,) was worn, secured by two such fastenings; similar to the supplemental padded piece of cloth, highly decorated, which formed a prominent portion of the uniform of some continental cavalry five-and-twenty years ago, and is possibly still in use. The only example of ancient Irish cloak which I have had an opportunity of examining, exhibited no traces of having been perforated by a pin or fibula, but on the contrary showed that "drag" or tension which would indicate that it was worn, like an Arab or Bedouin cloak, on the head; being there secured by a fillet and allowed to fly in the wind, or collected about the person when required for



M.Ward & C° Lith.

IRISH BRONZE ANTIQUITIES.

warmth; but in no way interfering with the use of the right hand in wielding the spear, or the left in guiding the horse. A recent writer on Irish antiquities suggests that the curved stem of these curious articles may have passed through eyelet-holes in the garment, and that they were consequently crooked pins or fibulæ. This notion altogether ignores the original use of the spiral wires, which according to my theory were the actual fasteners of the dress, and thus obviated entirely the necessity of making fixed eyelet-holes or other visible perforations, and by this mode of attachment, allowed ornamented metallic articles such as fig. 2, P. I. and fig. 2, P. II. to be fully exhibited. It is evident, also, from the expansion of portions of the curved tail into decorated surfaces (fig. 2, P. II.) that they were never intended to pass through eyelet holes; and when two instruments were coupled together, furnished with a disk at each end, such a method of use as that proposed was simply impossible.

With the view of testing my theory of the use of these articles, I made one of them, and tried many experiments with it on spiral wires, hooks, and buttons, which satisfied me that my explanation was highly probable. I still felt some doubt as to the precise use of the spirals, until I found examples of them on some arched brooches or fibulæ in the British Museum. These brooches appeared to have been secured to the outside of a garment by means of several short pointed helixes on the bent bar of each fibula, thus leaving free liberty of motion for the acus or tongue. By this contrivance, the place where the brooch was to be worn could be selected and changed at pleasure by the wearer; and he had it always ready to be rapidly fastened to the dress by a few turns of the wire, without injuring the garment. If he took his garment off, he was sure of not losing his brooch, as it could not separate itself. Helixes of this kind might perhaps be even found useful, if revived at the present day. I know of one specimen of bar-brooch found in Ireland (now in the Academy's Museum), with the fragments of some wire spirals upon it, which would favour the idea that their use in securing fibulæ of certain forms may not have been uncommon.

We are, I think, completely at fault for a specific or proper name for these curious things. We cannot call them "spectacle ornaments," as some have proposed, since that shape implies the constant usage of two of them yoked together like fig. 1, Plate II. That mode of using them is exceptional, and belongs to one "find" only, while we have at least six other "finds," in which these things appear complete, though single. My theory leads to the inference that the arch was worn inverted; and the spirals in the hooks *b b* countenance this inference, which is opposed to the adoption of the name "spectacle brooches or ornaments." And if they were worn, when single, with the disk down and the tail up, they were more like modern hand eye-glasses, and might be named accordingly, if it were not absurd to compare an opaque with a transparent object.

The name "latchet-fasteners,"—will apply to the helixes or spirals only, if they were used for fastening these things to the dress: in practice they were a species of spring-latchets, like the latch on a door, and were worn fully exposed on the fronts of two surfaces of cloth or leather, to each of which they were temporarily connected by two or more helixes, buttons, loops or hooks, or one of each; for each loop or hook, *a* and *b*, had to hold on to something, otherwise the latch action could not take place.

For so far, I have never heard that any specimens of these curved pins with disks have been found in either England, Wales, Scotland, or any of the Continental countries, so that they seem to present one of the types of ancient art peculiar to Ireland.

H.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES.

PLATE I.—Fig. 1, represents a latchet of bronze, full size, formerly in the collection of Mr. Cooke of Parsonstown. It is composed of a large disk A, to which is attached a tail bent into three loops *a*, *b*, *c*, and bearing two spiral wires of the same metal sharpened at the ends, by which the latchet may have been attached at pleasure to a dress or girdle in the manner indicated by fig. 9 in the same plate.

Fig. 2 is a modification of the preceding, (full size). It is likewise of bronze, but is enamelled, and the loops are closed, leaving apertures for receiving probably such hooks as are represented in fig. 9, plate II.; or for spirals which have disappeared.

Fig. 3 (about half-size) is a curious modification of the pattern of fig. 1, produced by cutting off the tail of the latter at the dotted line X, in the same way that the tails of A A, fig. 1, Plate II. are cut off at XX previously to being united by rivetting. The prolonged tails added to fig. 3, instead of the hook *c* (shown in dotted lines) might fit it for an ear-pendant, the hook *s* being bent over the ear and the loop *b* hanging down.

Fig. 4 (about half-size) is similar to fig. 3, and has its prolonged tail terminated by an ornament, showing that it was not intended to pass through the substance of the dress, but to appear externally.

Fig. 5 (about half-size) is a further modification of fig. 1, in which we discover only a trace of the disk A, and traces of loops or curves, one of the latter being here represented by a hole.

Fig. 6, a still further modification of our type fig 1. In it we lose all trace of a disk: *b* is a hole; the curve *c* still remains, but the tail *s* has lost its bend. This article must have served as a pin.

Fig. 7. In this specimen the hole *b* is enlarged into a ring: it is likewise a pin.

Fig. 8 exhibits a curious development of the tail portion only of our fig. 1, the loops *a* and *c* being intended to be caught by hooks.

Fig. 9, a representation of the double hook of a military belt, with an ideal expansion of the one end into a disk A (shown in dotted lines), and of the other end into a tail *c*, to illustrate the supposed use of the objects now under consideration.

Fig. 10 more distinctly exhibits the plain double hook or ∞, supplemented with an ideal disk and tail.

[Fig. 6 of Plate II. is a modification of the same pattern. It is imperfect, and may have been either a pin or hook; I suspect the latter, as B seems to be the remnant of a large disk. More specimens are required to determine its use.]

PLATE II. Fig. 1, represents one of the double or coupled articles mentioned by Dr. Ball; A A being the disks, corresponding to A in fig. 1 of Plate I.: *a*, *a*, *b*, *b*, are the equivalent loops; the loop *c* has been cut away from each half at X X, and the inverted arch-piece *d* substituted and inserted between the two. The spirals were of bronze wire, and served to grasp the surface of some article of dress. There were no spirals or loops in the curves *a*, *a*, as the weight of the different portions of this compound ornament, when it was suspended from *b*, *b*, in the position shown, rendered such unnecessary. The rivetting at the points X X is of bad workmanship, and the part *d* is very thin and unfinished, so that it is manifest that some ornamental work was used to cover it: and as the similar arch *d* in another specimen (fig. 7) is ornamented with plaited

silver wire, it is possible that something of the same kind may have been used here.

Fig. 2, represents an article like fig. 1, Plate I. but much smaller. It appears to be partly enamelled at the end of the tail, at the expansion between *a* and *b*, and in the central parts of the disk A. The pattern, though not fully developed, belongs to that which has been called "the trumpet pattern," of which the disks or expansions A A, in fig. 7, present so beautifully perfect a specimen.

Fig. 3 retains its likeness to our type, fig. 1. Plate I. but has the end of the tail expanded like fig. 2, Plate II. as if to receive a portion of enamel.

Fig. 4 may be taken as the true typical form of all these things. It was found with one helix in the loop *a*, which was closed by the bend of the loop *b* touching the disk, so that the helix could not escape. To complete the type, it ought to have another helix in loop *b*. It might then be supposed to be a fanciful representation of a tadpole clasped on the tail by two small eels. In this specimen the tail is pointed, but those represented by figs. 1 and 2, Plate I. and figs. 2, 3, and 5, Plate II. prove that the point is not an essential part of the original design.

Fig. 5 is copied (full size) from a specimen in the possesion of the Editor of this *Journal*. The ornamental lines on the extremity of the tail show that it was for exhibition, and not to be hidden in the dress.

Fig. 6 has been already referred to in describing Plate I.

Fig. 7 is a beautiful ornament, formed of cast white bronze, the design of which is beyond a doubt derived from the ornament with two disks, fig. 1, so modified and contracted, that with the acus or tongue behind, it has become a double brooch to be worn horizontally on the breast in the same manner as fig. 1.

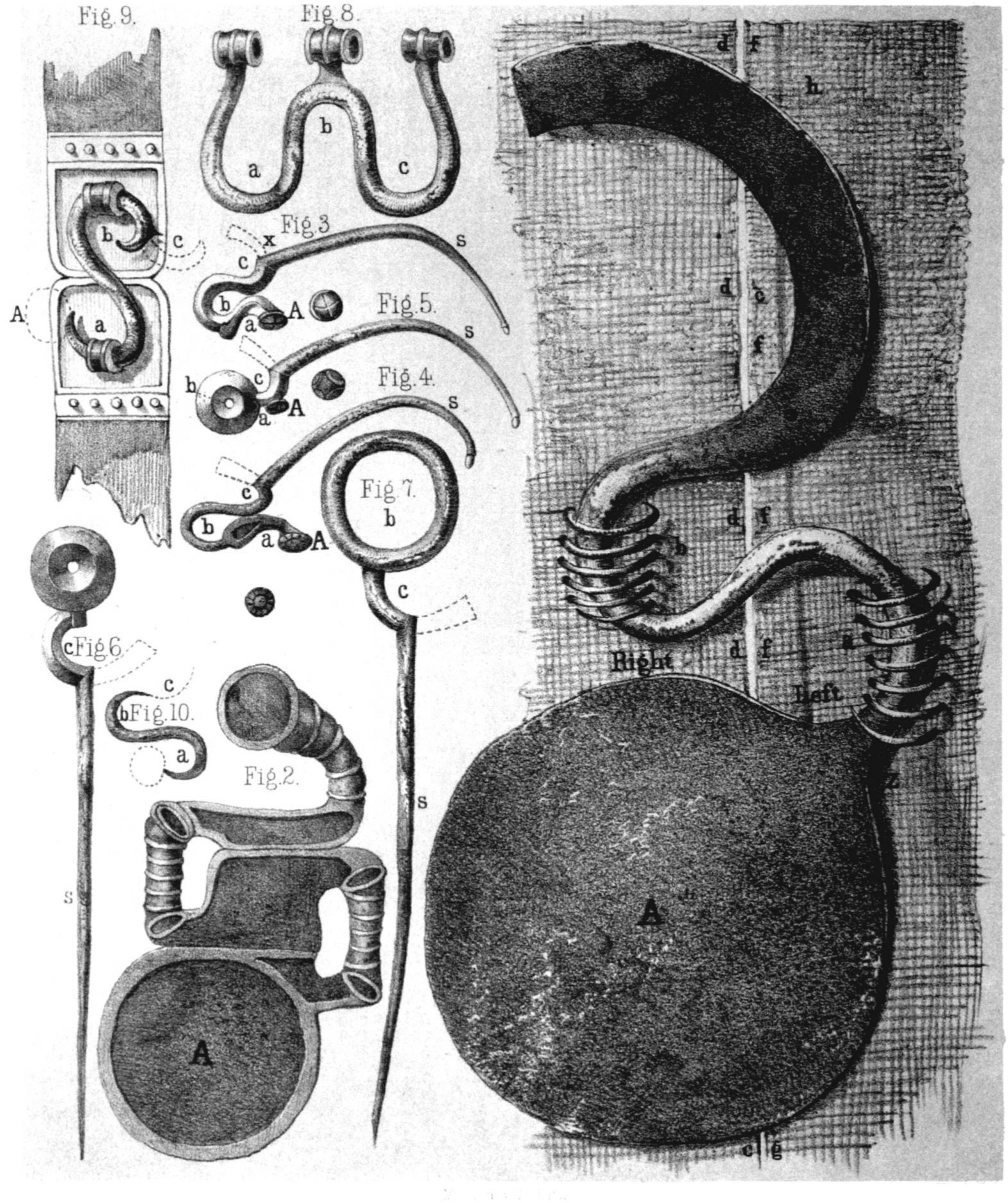
Fig. 8 represents the spatula of a *stylus* or instrument for writing on wax. It is inserted here in order to exemplify the use of the helix or spiral of double pointed wire in fastening an article to the surface of a dress. The modern Irish "poor scholar" secures his pen by passing it through the button-hole of his coat; but the scribe of the olden time, who wrote on wax tablets, preferred exhibiting his *stylus* dangling from a helix. Possibly the rings (split or solid), found attached to many bronze pins, may have been employed for the same purpose; and may indicate that such pins were used for writing on tablets, or at least for making the sign of a cross as a signature.

Fig. 9, a very beautiful hook, such as we might expect to find used for holding the loops *a* and *b* of such an ornament as fig. 2, plate I.

Fig. 10, a highly ornamented enamelled button, which might have served to hold either loop *a* or *b* of fig. 5. It suggests an arrangement in which the disk, ornamented in some manner, and two lateral buttons similarly ornamented, clasped into the two loops *a* and *b*, would represent a tre-foil or shamrock such as

Fig. 11, in which the prolongation of the hooked tail would correspond with the stalk of the leaf.

☞ All the specimens here figured are now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, except those otherwise specified in the foregoing paper.



IRISH BRONZE ANTIQUITIES.